

THE RAMBLING SAILOR

By CHARLOTTE MEW

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP

1st Ed

SCARCE

25-



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

<https://archive.org/details/ramblingsailor0000char>

THE RAMBLING SAILOR





Charlotte Mew

THE RAMBLING SAILOR

BY
CHARLOTTE MEW



THE POETRY BOOKSHOP
38 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.1

By the Same Author
THE FARMER'S BRIDE (1915)

First Published . . . 1929

Made and Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY NOTE	7
IN THE FIELDS	9
FROM A WINDOW	10
NOT FOR THAT CITY	11
ROOMS	12
MONSIEUR QUI PASSE	13
DO DREAMS LIE DEEPER?	14
DOMUS CAEDET ARBOREM	15
FIN DE FÊTE	16
AGAIN	17
EPITAPH	18
FRIEND, WHEREFORE——?	19
I SO LIKED SPRING	20
HERE LIES A PRISONER	21
MAY, 1915	22
JUNE, 1915	23
NE ME TANGITO	24
OLD SHEPHERD'S PRAYER	25
MY HEART IS LAME	26
ON YOUTH STRUCK DOWN	27
THE TREES ARE DOWN	28
SMILE, DEATH	29
THE RAMBLING SAILOR	30
THE CALL	32
ABSENCE	33
TO A CHILD IN DEATH	34
MOORLAND NIGHT	35

EARLY POEMS

AT THE CONVENT GATE	39
REQUIESCAT	40
THE LITTLE PORTRESS	41
AFTERNOON TEA	43
SHE WAS A SINNER	44
SONG	45

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

CHARLOTTE MARY MEW was born in London on the 15th November, 1870, the daughter of an architect. She passed the whole of her life except for brief intervals in the heart of Bloomsbury.

While she was still young her father died and left her and her mother and family in financial difficulties. Her temperament was keyed very low, and the tribulations and batterings of her personal life, including the poverty that dogged her all her days, were probably responsible for the fact that many of the poems in her first book, *The Farmer's Bride*, and indeed in this second book of posthumous poems, show an intense preoccupation with death and disaster either physical or spiritual.

In 1922, through the united efforts of Thomas Hardy (who thought her one of the best poets of the time), John Masefield and Walter de la Mare, she received a Civil List pension of seventy-five pounds a year. This was helpful in mitigating the strain of poverty, but no sooner was the financial burden alleviated than her mother died, and her own health broke down. Both these trials were overcome and all seemed ready for a return to productive life when her beloved sister was stricken with a fatal illness and died after some months of agony. For a time it seemed she could repulse this last attack of Fate, but subsequently it became evident that her resistance had given way and she died in a nursing home, by her own hand, on the 24th March, 1928.

No pen portrait can convey the deep charm and rare wit that were the continual delight of Charlotte Mew's intimates ; nor can the passionate sincerity and truth with which she faced the onslaughts of life be portrayed except through her poems. The following quotations, which are taken from her volume, *The Farmer's Bride*, exemplify this point :—

If there were fifty heavens God could not give us back the child
that went or never came.

* * *

Sometimes in the over-heated house, but not for long,
Smirking and speaking rather loud,
I see myself among the crowd,
Where no one fits the singer to his song.

* * *

Heer's the same little fishes that sputter and swim,
Wi' the moon's old glim on the grey, wet sand ;
An' him no more to me nor me to him
Than the wind goin' over my hand.

No subterfuges were possible for her, no lurking in stealthy byways stalking the hope of better things in a Better World. She was always conscious she once admitted of what seemed to her an Earthly Presence, a bond, an actual contact with the earth, of a knowledge of final peace in the heart of things. " Moorland Sanctuary " may be taken as her own expression of her belief. She read many times, to the writer of this note, a poem (which has not been found among her papers) which described how a Breton shepherd one night left his sheep to lay himself at the feet of a Wayside Calvary, and the next morning passers-by found a heap of leaves—all that was left of him. She finished the poem with her characteristic toss of the head, and the admission that for her part, such a death, perhaps in a wood, was all she asked. But Death came to her in the heart of London, surrounded by no trees, no birds, nothing but grey bricks and greyer life.

It is not proposed in this brief note to offer a critical estimate of her work. The fact that she was awarded a Civil List pension is sufficient evidence of the esteem in which it was held by sensitive critics. Among Thomas Hardy's papers was found copied from *The Sphere*, the poem " Fin de Fête."

The best of her early poems and those most indicative of her tragic personality are included in this volume, in a separate section. All of them appeared in *Temple Bar*, to which periodical she contributed verse and prose for a number of years in her early life. She also contributed essays, poems and stories to *The Yellow Book*, *The Englishwoman*, *The Nation*, *The New Statesman*, *The Chapbook*, etc.

Charlotte Mew's dislike of publicity was extreme and her defiant reserve, in later years, placed every obstacle in the way of those who desired to secure her friendship. However, to those she loved and trusted she gave loyalty and companionship without stint.

A. K.



IN THE FIELDS

LORD, when I look at lovely things which pass,
Under old trees the shadows of young leaves
Dancing to please the wind along the grass,

Or the gold stillness of the August sun on the August sheaves ;
Can I believe there is a heavenlier world than this ?

And if there is
Will the strange heart of any everlasting thing

Bring me these dreams that take my breath away ?
They come at evening with the home-flying rooks and the scent of hay,
Over the fields. They come in Spring.



FROM A WINDOW

UP here, with June, the sycamore throws
Across the window a whispering screen;
I shall miss the sycamore more, I suppose,
Than anything else on this earth that is out in green.
But I mean to go through the door without fear,
Not caring much what happens here
When I'm away :—
How green the screen is across the panes
Or who goes laughing along the lanes
With my old lover all the summer day.



NOT FOR THAT CITY

NOT for that city of the level sun,
Its golden streets and glittering gates ablaze—
The shadeless, sleepless city of white days,
White nights, or nights and days that are as one—
We weary, when all is said, all thought, all done.
We strain our eyes beyond this dusk to see
What, from the threshold of eternity
We shall step into. No, I think we shun
The splendour of that everlasting glare,
The clamour of that never-ending song.
And if for anything we greatly long,
It is for some remote and quiet stair
Which winds to silence and a space of sleep
Too sound for waking and for dreams too deep.



ROOMS

I REMEMBER rooms that have had their part
In the steady slowing down of the heart.
The room in Paris, the room at Geneva,
The little damp room with the seaweed smell,
And that ceaseless maddening sound of the tide—
Rooms where for good or for ill—things died.
But there is the room where we (two) lie dead,
Though every morning we seem to wake and might just as well seem to sleep again
As we shall somewhere in the other quieter, dustier bed
Out there in the sun—in the rain.



MONSIEUR QUI PASSE

QUAI VOLTAIRE

A PURPLE blot against the dead white door
In my friend's rooms, bathed in their vile pink light,
I had not noticed her before
She snatched my eyes and threw them back at me :
She did not speak till we came out into the night,
Paused at this bench beside the kiosk on the quay.

God knows precisely what she said—
I left to her the twisted skein,
Though here and there I caught a thread,—
Something, at first, about “the lamps along the Seine,
And Paris, with that witching card of Spring
Kept up her sleeve,—why you could see
The trick done on these freezing winter nights !
While half the kisses of the Quay—
Youth, hope,—the whole enchanted string
Of dreams hung on the Seine's long line of lights.”

Then suddenly she stripped, the very skin
Came off her soul,—a mere girl clings
Longer to some last rag, however thin,
When she has shown you—well—all sorts of things :
“If it were daylight—oh ! one keeps one's head—
But fourteen years !—No one has ever guessed—
The whole thing starts when one gets to bed—
Death ?—If the dead would tell us they had rest !
But your eyes held it as I stood there by the door—
One speaks to Christ—one tries to catch His garment's hem—
One hardly says as much to Him—no more :
It was not you, it was your eyes—I spoke to them.”

She stopped like a shot bird that flutters still,
And drops, and tries to run again, and swerves.
The tale should end in some walled house upon a hill.
My eyes, at least, won't play such havoc there,—
Or hers— But she had hair !—blood dipped in gold ;
And here she left me throwing back the first odd stare.
Some sort of beauty once, but turning yellow, getting old.
Pouah ! These women and their nerves !
God ! but the night is cold !

DO DREAMS LIE DEEPER ?

HIS dust looks up to the changing sky
Through daisies' eyes ;
And when a swallow flies
Only so high
He hears her going by
As daisies do. He does not die
In this brown earth where he was glad enough to lie.

But looking up from that other bed,
"There is something more my own," he said,
"Than hands or feet or this restless head
That must be buried when I am dead.
The Trumpet may wake every other sleeper.
Do dreams lie deeper—— ?
And what sunrise
When these are shut shall open their little eyes ?
They are my children, they have very lovely faces—
And how does one bury the breathless dreams ?
They are not of the earth and not of the sea,
They have no friends here but the flakes of the falling snow ;
You and I will go down two paces—
Where do they go ? "



DOMUS CAEDET ARBOREM

EVER since the great planes were murdered at the end of the gardens
The city, to me, at night has the look of a Spirit brooding crime ;
As if the dark houses watching the trees from dark windows
Were simply biding their time.



FIN DE FÊTE

SWEETHEART, for such a day
One mustn't grudge the score ;
Here, then, it's all to pay,
It's Good-night at the door.

Good-night and good dreams to you,—
Do you remember the picture-book thieves
Who left two children sleeping in a wood the long night through,
And how the birds came down and covered them with leaves ?

So you and I should have slept,—But now,
Oh, what a lonely head !
With just the shadow of a waving bough
In the moonlight over your bed.



AGAIN

ONE day, not here, you will find a hand
Stretched out to you as you walk down some heavenly street ;
You will see a stranger scarred from head to feet ;
But when he speaks to you you will not understand,
Nor yet who wounded him nor why his wounds are sweet.
And saying nothing, letting go his hand,
You will leave him in the heavenly street—
So we shall meet !



EPITAPH

HE loved gay things
Yet with the brave
He laughed when he was covered with grey wings,
—Asking the darkest angel for bright things
And the angel gave—
So with a smile he overstepped the grave.



FRIEND, WHEREFORE—— ?

I WILL not count the years—there are days too—
And to-night again I have said
“What if you should be lying dead?”
Well, if it were so, I could only lay my head
Quietly on the pillow of my bed
Thinking of Him on whom poor sufferers cried
Suffering Himself so much before He died :
And then of Judas walking three years by His side—
How Judas kissed Him—how He was crucified.
Always when I see you
I see those two ;
Oh ! God it is true
We do not, all of us, know what we do ;
But Judas knew.



I SO LIKED SPRING

I SO liked Spring last year
Because you were here ;—
The thrushes too—
Because it was these you so liked to hear—
I so liked you.

This year's a different thing,—
I'll not think of you.
But I'll like Spring because it is simply Spring
As the thrushes do.



HERE LIES A PRISONER

LEAVE him : he's quiet enough : and what matter
Out of his body or in, you can scatter
The frozen breath of his silenced soul, of his outraged soul to the winds that rave :
Quieter now than he used to be, but listening still to the magpie chatter
Over his grave.



MAY, 1915

LET us remember Spring will come again
To the scorched, blackened woods, where the wounded trees
Wait, with their old wise patience for the heavenly rain,
Sure of the sky : sure of the sea to send its healing breeze,
Sure of the sun. And even as to these
Surely the Spring, when God shall please,
Will come again like a divine surprise
To those who sit to-day with their great Dead, hands in their hands, eyes in their
eyes,
At one with Love, at one with Grief : blind to the scattered things and changing
skies.



JUNE, 1915

WHO thinks of June's first rose to-day?

Only some child, perhaps, with shining eyes and rough bright hair will
reach it down

In a green sunny lane, to us almost as far away

As are the fearless stars from these veiled lamps of town.

What's little June to a great broken world with eyes gone dim

From too much looking on the face of grief, the face of dread?

Or what's the broken world to June and him

Of the small eager hand, the shining eyes, the rough bright head?



NE ME TANGITO

“This man . . . would have known who and what manner of woman this is : for she is a sinner.”—*S. Luke vii. 39.*

ODD, *You* should fear the touch,
The first that I was ever ready to let go,
I, that have not cared much
For any toy I could not break and throw
To the four winds when I had done with it. You need not fear the touch,
Blindest of all the things that I have cared for very much
In the whole gay, unbearable, amazing show.

True—for a moment—no, dull heart, you were too small,
Thinking to hide the ugly doubt behind that hurried puzzled little smile :
Only the shade, was it, you saw ? but still the shade of something vile :
Oddest of all !

So I will tell you this. Last night, in sleep,
Walking through April fields I heard the far-off bleat of sheep
And from the trees about the farm, not very high,
A flight of pigeons fluttered up into an early evening mackerel sky.

Someone stood by and it was you :
About us both a great wind blew.
My breast was bared
But sheltered by my hair
I found you, suddenly, lying there,
Tugging with tiny fingers at my heart, no more afraid :
The weakest thing, the most divine
That ever yet was mine,
Something that I had strangely made,
So then it seemed—
The child for which I had not looked or ever cared,
Of whom, before, I had never dreamed.



OLD SHEPHERD'S PRAYER

UP to the bed by the window, where I be lyin',
Comes bells and bleat of the flock wi' they two children's clack.
Over, from under the eaves there's the starlings flyin',
And down in yard, fit to burst his chain, yapping out at Sue I do hear young Mac.

Turning around like a falled-over sack
I can see team ploughin' in Whithy-bush field and meal carts startin' up road to
Church-Town;
Saturday arternoon the men goin' back
And the women from market, trapin' home over the down.

Heavenly Master, I wud like to wake to they same green places
Where I be know'd for breakin' dogs and follerin' sheep.
And if I may not walk in th' old ways and look on th' old faces
I wud sooner sleep.



MY HEART IS LAME

MY heart is lame with running after yours so fast
Such a long way,
Shall we walk slowly home, looking at all the things we passed
Perhaps to-day?

Home down the quiet evening roads under the quiet skies,
Not saying much,
You for a moment giving me your eyes
When you could bear my touch.

But not to-morrow. This has taken all my breath ;
Then, though you look the same,
There may be something lovelier in Love's face in death
As your heart sees it, running back the way we came ;
My heart is lame.



ON YOUTH STRUCK DOWN

(FROM AN UNFINISHED ELEGY)

O H ! Death what have you to say ?
“ Like a bride—like a bride-groom they ride away :
You shall go back to make up the fire,
To learn patience—to learn grief,
To learn sleep when the light has quite gone out of your earthly skies,
But they have the light in their eyes
To the end of their day.”



THE TREES ARE DOWN

—and he cried with a loud voice :
Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees—
(Revelation.)

THEY are cutting down the great plane-trees at the end of the gardens.
For days there has been the grate of the saw, the swish of the branches as they fall,
The crash of trunks, the rustle of trodden leaves,
With the "Whoops" and the "Whoas," the loud common talk, the loud common laughs of the men, above it all.

I remember one evening of a long past Spring
Turning in at a gate, getting out of a cart, and finding a large dead rat in the mud of the drive.
I remember thinking : alive or dead, a rat was a god-forsaken thing,
But at least, in May, that even a rat should be alive.

The week's work here is as good as done. There is just one bough
On the roped bole, in the fine grey rain,
Green and high
And lonely against the sky.
(Down now !—)
And but for that,
If an old dead rat
Did once, for a moment, unmake the Spring, I might never have thought of him again.

It is not for a moment the Spring is unmade to-day ;
These were great trees, it was in them from root to stem :
When the men with the "Whoops" and the "Whoas" have carted the whole of the whispering loveliness away
Half the Spring, for me, will have gone with them.

It is going now, and my heart has been struck with the hearts of the planes;
Half my life it has beat with these, in the sun, in the rains,
In the March wind, the May breeze,
In the great gales that came over to them across the roofs from the great seas.
There was only a quiet rain when they were dying ;
They must have heard the sparrows flying,
And the small creeping creatures in the earth where they were lying—
But I, all day, I heard an angel crying :
"Hurt not the trees."

SMILE, DEATH

SMILE, Death, see I smile as I come to you
Straight from the road and the moor that I leave behind,
Nothing on earth to me was like this wind-blown space,
Nothing was like the road, but at the end there was a vision or a face
And the eyes were not always kind.

Smile, Death, as you fasten the blades to my feet for me,
On, on let us skate past the sleeping willows dusted with snow ;
Fast, fast down the frozen stream, with the moor and the road and the vision behind,
(Show me your face, why the eyes are kind !)
And we will not speak of life or believe in it or remember it as we go.



THE RAMBLING SAILOR

IN the old back streets o' Pimlico,
On the docks at Monte Video,
At the Ring o' Bells on Plymouth Hoe
He'm arter me now wheerever I go.
An' dirty nights when the wind do blow
I can hear him sing-songin' up from sea :
Oh ! no man nor woman's bin friend to me
An' to-day I'm feared wheer to-morrow I'll be,
Sin' the night the moon lay whist and white
On the road goin' down to the Lizard Light
When I heard him hummin' behind me.

*" Oh ! look, boy, look in your sweetheart's eyes
So deep as sea an' so blue as skies ;
An' 'tis better to kiss than to chide her.
If they tell 'ee no tales, they'll tell 'ee no lies
Of the little brown mouse
That creeps into the house
To lie sleepin' so quiet beside her.*

*" Oh ! hold 'ee long, but hold 'ee light
Your true man's hand when you find him,
He'll help 'ee home on a darksome night
Wi' a somethin' bright
That he'm holdin' tight
In the hand that he keeps behind him.*

*" Oh ! sit 'ee down to your whack o' pies,
So hot's the stew and the brew likewise,
But whiles you'm scrapin' the plates and dishes,
A'gapin' down in the shiversome sea
For the delicate mossels inside o' we
Theer's a passel o' hungry fishes."*

At the *Halte des Marins* at Saint Nazaire
I cussed him, sittin' astride his chair ;
An' Christmas Eve on the Mary Clare
I pitched him a'down the hatch-way stair.
But " Shoutin' and cloutin's nothing to me,
Nor the hop nor the skip nor the jump," says he,
" For I be walkin' on every quay—"

*"So look, boy, look in the dear maid's eyes
And take the true man's hand
And eat your fill o' your whack o' pies
Till you'm starin' up wheer the sea-crow flies
Wi' your head lyin' soft in the sand."*



THE CALL

FROM our low seat beside the fire
Where we have dozed and dreamed and watched
the glow
Or raked the ashes, stopping so
We scarcely saw the sun or rain
Above, or looked much higher
Than this same quiet red or burned-out fire.
To-night we heard a call,
A rattle on the window-pane,
A voice on the sharp air,
And felt a breath stirring our hair,
A flame within us : Something swift and tall
Swept in and out and that was all.
Was it a bright or a dark angel ? Who can know ?
It left no mark upon the snow,
But suddenly it snapped the chain
Unbarred, flung wide the door
Which will not shut again ;
And so we cannot sit here any more.
We must arise and go :
The world is cold without
And dark and hedged about
With mystery and enmity and doubt,
But we must go
Though yet we do not know
Who called, or what marks we shall leave upon the snow.



ABSENCE

SOMETIMES I know the way
 You walk, up over the bay ;
It is a wind from that far sea
That blows the fragrance of your hair to me.

Or in this garden when the breeze
 Touches my trees
To stir their dreaming shadows on the grass
 I see you pass.

In sheltered beds, the heart of every rose
 Serenely sleeps to-night. As shut as those
Your guarded heart ; as safe as they from the beat, beat
Of hooves that tread dropped roses in the street.

 Turn never again
 On these eyes blind with a wild rain
Your eyes ; they were stars to me.—
 There are things stars may not see.

But call, call, and though Christ stands
 Still with scarred hands
Over my mouth, I must answer. So,
I will come—He shall let me go !



TO A CHILD IN DEATH

YOU would have scoffed if we had told you yesterday
Love made us feel, or so it was with me, like some great bird
Trying to hold and shelter you in its strong wing ;—
A gay little shadowy smile would have tossed us back such a solemn word,
And it was not for that you were listening
When so quietly you slipped away
With half the music of the world unheard.
What shall we do with this strange summer, meant for you,—
Dear, if we see the winter through
What shall be done with spring?
This, this is the victory of the Grave ; here is death's sting,
That it is not strong enough, our strongest wing.

But what of His who like a Father pitieth?
His Son was also, once, a little thing,
The wistfullest child that ever drew breath,
Chased by a sword from Bethlehem and in the busy house at Nazareth
Playing with little rows of nails, watching the carpenter's hammer swing,
Long years before His hands and feet were tied
And by a hammer and the three great nails He died,
Of youth, of Spring,
Of sorrow, of loneliness, of victory the King,
Under the shadow of that wing.



MOORLAND NIGHT

MY face is against the grass—the moorland grass is wet—
My eyes are shut against the grass, against my lips there are the little blades,
Over my head the curlews call,
And now there is the night wind in my hair ;
My heart is against the grass and the sweet earth ;—it has gone still, at last.
It does not want to beat any more,
And why should it beat ?
This is the end of the journey ;
The Thing is found.

This is the end of all the roads—
Over the grass there is the night-dew
And the wind that drives up from the sea along the moorland road ;
I hear a curlew start out from the heath
And fly off, calling through the dusk,
The wild, long, rippling call.
The Thing is found and I am quiet with the earth.
Perhaps the earth will hold it, or the wind, or that bird's cry,
But it is not for long in any life I know. This cannot stay,
Not now, not yet, not in a dying world, with me, for very long.
I leave it here :
And one day the wet grass may give it back—
One day the quiet earth may give it back—
The calling birds may give it back as they go by—
To someone walking on the moor who starves for love and will not know
Who gave it to all these to give away ;
Or, if I come and ask for it again,
Oh ! then, to me.



EARLY POEMS

AT THE CONVENT GATE

“ **W**HY do you shrink away, and start and stare?
Life frowns to see you leaning at death's gate—
Not back, but on. Ah ! sweet, it is too late :
You cannot cast these kisses from your hair.
Will God's cold breath blow kindly anywhere
Upon such burning gold ? Oh ! lips worn white
With waiting ! Love will blossom in a night
And you shall wake to find the roses there ! ”

“ Oh hush ! He seems to stir, He lifts His Head.
He smiles. Look where He hangs against the sky.
He never smiled nor stirred, that God of pain
With tired eyes and limbs above my bed—
But loose me, this is death, I will not die—
Not while He smiles. Oh ! Christ, Thine own again ! ”



REQUIESCAT

YOUR birds that call from tree to tree
Just overhead, and whirl and dart,
Your breeze fresh-blowing from the sea,
And your sea singing on, Sweetheart.

Your salt scent on the thin sharp air
Of this grey dawn's first drowsy hours,
While on the grass shines everywhere
The yellow starlight of your flowers.

At the road's end your strip of blue
Beyond that line of naked trees—
Strange that we should remember you
As if you would remember these !

As if your spirit, swaying yet
To the old passions, were not free
Of Spring's wild magic, and the fret
Of the wilder wooing of the sea !

What threat of old imaginings,
Half-haunted joy, enchanted pain,
Or dread of unfamiliar things
Should ever trouble you again ?

Yet you would wake and want, you said,
The little whirr of wings, the clear
Gay notes, the wind, the golden bed
Of the daffodil : and they are here !

Just overhead, they whirl and dart
Your birds that call from tree to tree,
Your sea is singing on—Sweetheart,
Your breeze is blowing from the sea.

Beyond the line of naked trees
At the road's end, your stretch of blue—
Strange if you should remember these
As we, ah ! God ! remember you !



THE LITTLE PORTRESS

(ST. GILDA DE RHUYS)

THE stillness of the sunshine lies
Upon her spirit : silence seems
To look out from its place of dreams
When suddenly she lifts her eyes
To waken, for a little space,
The smile asleep upon her face.

A thousand years of sun and shower,
The melting of unnumbered snows
Go to the making of the rose
Which blushes out its little hour.
So old is Beauty : in its heart
The ages seem to meet and part.

Like Beauty's self, she holds a clear
Deep memory of hidden things—
The music of forgotten springs—
So far she travels back, so near
She seems to stand to patient truth
As old as Age, as young as Youth.

That is her window, by the gate.
Now and again her figure flits
Across the wall. Long hours she sits
Within : on all who come to wait.
Her Saviour too is hanging there
A foot or so above her chair.

“ Sœur Marie de l'enfant Jésus,”
You wrote it in my little book—
Your shadow-name. Your shadow-look
Is dimmer and diviner too,
But not to keep : it slips so far
Beyond us to that golden bar

Where angels, watching from their stair,
Half-envy you your tranquil days
Of prayer as exquisite as praise,—

Grey twilights softer than their glare
Of glory : all sweet human things
Which vanish with the whirr of wings.

Yet will you, when you wing your way
To whiter worlds, more whitely shine
Or shed a radiance more divine
Than here you shed from day to day—
High in His heaven a quiet star,
Be nearer God than now you are ?



AFTERNOON TEA

PLEASE you, excuse me, good five-o'clock people,
I've lost my last hatful of words,
And my heart's in the wood up above the church steeple,
I'd rather have tea with the birds.

Gay Kate's stolen kisses, poor Barnaby's scars,
John's losses and Mary's gains,
Oh ! what do they matter, my dears, to the stars
Or the glow-worms in the lanes !

I'd rather lie under the tall elm-trees,
With old rooks talking loud overhead,
To watch a red squirrel run over my knees,
Very still on my bracken bed.

And wonder what feathers the wrens will be taking
For lining their nests next Spring ;
Or why the tossed shadow of boughs in a great wind shaking
Is such a lovely thing.



SHE WAS A SINNER

LOVE was my flower, and before He came—
“Master, there was a garden where it grew
Rank, with the colour of a crimson flame,

Thy flower too, but knowing not its name
Nor yet that it was Thine, I did not spare
But tore and trampled it and stained my hair,
My hands, my lips, with the red petals ; see,

Drenched with the blood of Thy poor murdered flower
I stood, when suddenly the hour

Struck for me,
And straight I came and wound about Thy Feet
The strands of shame

Twined with those broken buds : till lo, more sweet,

More red, yet still the same,
Bright burning blossoms sprang around Thy brow
Beneath the thorns (I saw, I know not how,
The crown which Thou wast afterward to wear

On that immortal Tree)
And I went out and found my garden very bare,
But swept and watered it, then followed Thee.

There was another garden where to seek
Thee, first, I came in those grey hours
Of the Great Dawn, and knew Thee not till Thou didst speak
My name, that ‘Mary’ like a flash of light
Shot from Thy lips. Thou wast ‘the gardener’ too,

And then I knew
That evermore our flowers,
Thine, Lord, and mine, shall be a burning white.”



SONG

OH ! Sorrow, Sorrow, scarce I knew
Your name when, shaking down the may
In sport, a little child, I grew
Afraid to find you at my play.
I heard it ere I looked at you ;
You sang it softly as you came
Bringing your little boughs of yew
To fling across my gayest game.

Oh ! Sorrow, Sorrow, was I fair
That when I decked me for a bride,
You met me stepping down the stair
And led me from my lover's side ?
Was I so dear you could not spare
The maid to love, the child to play,
But coming always unaware,
Must bid and beckon me away ?

Oh ! Sorrow, Sorrow, is my bed
So wide and warm that you must lie
Upon it ; toss your weary head
And stir my slumber with your sigh ?
I left my love at your behest,
I waved your little boughs of yew,
But, Sorrow, Sorrow, let me rest,
For oh ! I cannot sleep with you !





P9-EHV-435

